343-01D Dialogue Among World Religions

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"DIALOGUE AMONG WORLD RELIGIONS"

SYLLABUS

REQUIRED TEXTS


COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will introduce students to the study of world religions, especially as they are lived out in the U.S. We will focus on Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. At the same time, students will learn about and practice initial forms of inter-religious dialogue. They will be able to discover the value of inter-religious dialogue through visiting local places of worship and discussing current social issues with guest speakers of various religions. In the last three classes, four models of approaching and engaging members of other world religions will be examined. A key goal of this course then is to enable students to expand their world views and foster deeper understanding, solidarity, and peace among members of different religions locally and globally. Students may choose to develop a deeper purpose and meaning for their lives as well as the value of person spiritual development in the context of a religious community.

OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Identify key moral beliefs, values, and practices of members of some major world religions.

2. Engage in respectful inter-religious dialogue, having experimented in such dialogue in class.

3. Describe the various models of Christian approaches to other religions.

4. Encourage and promote compassionate solidarity among the religions and a global perspective.

PROCEDURE

- **Active class participation and dialogue**: this course is based on the practice of dialogue.

- **Focused class discussions**: a driving force for learning. Students critically analyze the assigned texts and hand-outs from the professor. Careful reading and preparation of notes, questions, and comments before class are required to enable fruitful inter-religious dialogue.

- **Class trips to various local places of worship**: dialogue with members of other faiths on their turf about their beliefs and various social issues. Deep respect for each other’s opinions and religious beliefs are vital for the success of this course. Speak for yourself, not for others.
EXPECTATIONS

1. Attendance
   • Since this is a course based on discussion and dialogue, attendance is required for the full class time. If you miss more than two classes, you will be required to drop the course, unless there is permission given by the professor.
   • Because traveling is involved to meet with guest speakers at their places of worship, it is crucial to be on time for each class. If you come late, we may have already left the XU classroom. If you arrive after attendance has been taken, you will need to check in with the professor after class. Otherwise, you will be marked absent. Every three late arrivals will equal one missed class. Tardiness will affect final grades.
   • Students will need to drive and/or car pool to visit local places of worship.

2. Participation
   Students will be expected to read assigned materials carefully and be able to comment on them in class. It is understandable that some students speak more readily than others, but each and every student will be expected to express their views, at least occasionally.

3. Written Questions for guides at places of worship
   Students are required to write at least 2 questions to help generate group discussion questions with our guest speakers. Please hand them in at the end of each class. The hope is that this will encourage thoughtful, honest and respectful questions based on your reading of the text book and your life experience. The question should be formed around a social issue that fosters dialogue and understanding of each other’s rationale and value systems. For example, “What does your religion teach about gay marriage? And what are your views?” “What is the role of women in your church leadership?” Ask friends of other religions for help formulate a question or go to “Google.com,” and type “Buddhists on ecology issues,” “Jewish views on the death penalty,” etc.

   Students will turn in typed answers to each assigned question using 12 pt text, double-spaced with one-inch margins. NOTE! Be sure to give the page and question number of each question you are answering as it corresponds to the text book. If possible, print on both sides of the paper. Please staple!

5. Class Presentations of Dr. Knitter’s book Theologies of Religions for last three classes.
   Groups of students will choose and present one of the four main models discussed in Knitter’s book.
   NOTE! For your group’s class presentation lasting 45-60 minutes, you are to provide all other students with a one page typed summary outline that describes the main points of your particular model, as explain by Knitter. You basically want to define how Christians in this model have typically related to members of other religions. In addition, point out the positive and negative points of your model as also described by Dr. Knitter. Keep your outline and oral presentation simple, skipping unimportant details. (Homework questions will be provided to help you focus on key points of each chapter.)

6. Final Term Paper of 7-9 pages will be due the last class covering these four main points:
A) Write roughly one page about each of the five religions and the five corresponding guest speakers we had explaining:

1. at least 2-3 key religious themes, teachings, values, leaders, rituals and/or practices that seem to give their members purpose and meaning in their lives.

2. What/who gives them personal strength, peace hope in their good and especially difficult times in their lives?

3. What/who do you believe empowers them to work for a more socially just and peaceful community and healthier eco-system? For example, when you consider our guest speaker on Buddhism, Dr. Kathleen Mathews, why is meditation, a source for her inner peace, so important to her personally and her profession?

B) Write at least one page reflecting on what you’ve written above, explaining:

1. How might these religions and guest speakers then enable you to further develop a unifying theme, goal, mission or purpose in your own life?

2. So, who/what gives you hope, peace and strength in good times and bad? How do you want to be remembered? What do you want on your tombstone?

OR read two new other chapters of Neusner’s book about two other religions we have not read for class and write a summary of the key teachings, practices, leaders, values of that religion that impressed you. And answer point B) above.

C) Write one-two pages about Knitter’s chapters:

1. Briefly describing the 4 models of how Christians typically relate to members of other world religions from his book while pointing out a few positive and negative points of each of these models.

2. Also, reflect on and write about how these various models can personally influence how you relate with persons from other cultures or with different political or social viewpoints.

D) Conclude by writing 1 or 2 paragraphs that you could share and read to the whole class that sums up what you want to take away from this class overall. Or, what you do not want to forget from this class. (check out the “Objectives” for this course on page 1 to guide you.)

PLEASE NOTE: FOR ALL HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS AND FINAL PAPER

- Please use Microsoft Word, 12 pt, double-spaced, one-inch margins, especially if you e-mail your papers to me. I encourage using both side of the paper. Please staple!
- More than two spelling and/or grammatical mistakes per page will result in a half-letter reduction in your grade.
- Late submissions will affect your grade: Assignments are due at the beginning of each class. If you e-mail, papers must be received by the professor the day before the class.

GRADING

- Class attendance, participation and quality of dialogue: 20%
- Written questions/comments for the guest speakers: 5%
- Homework assignments from Neusner’s and Knitter’s books: 30%
- Class presentation from Knitter’s book: 20%
- Final term paper: 25%

Note: To earn an “A” for the course all these components and assignments are to be completed with college level depth. This means:
explaining the reasons for your answers,

challenging various viewpoints,

wrestling with the author’s main message, and

developing new personal insights and questions.

TO REACH ME

- If you have questions, concerns, problems, suggestions or bright ideas, I’d be happy to meet and talk with you. While I have a full time position at the Archdiocese of Cincinnati that requires me to usually be in my office downtown from 8:30-4:30 and out for some evening programs, I can usually meet you before or after classes or make a special appointment time to meet at XU.

- Telephone, you may phone me during regular office hours at my archdiocesan office at: (513) 421-3131 x. 2630 or at my home in the evenings at (513) 598-6478.

- PLEASE USE this e-mail address: mgable@catholiccincinnati.com not my XU e-mail address.

Plagiarism: Note the following about academic integrity

When we use the information and language of others to enrich our reflection and research papers we must:

- Tell the reader when you are quoting and indicate the source (person, book, article, etc.) of the quotation.

- Tell the reader when you are paraphrasing and indicate the source (person, book, article, etc.) of that information.

- Remember that quoting or paraphrasing the information and/or language of a source without naming the source is plagiarism. Plagiarism is unacceptable in an academic institution and is subject to penalty. Please consult the Xavier University Catalog for additional information and policies regarding academic honesty.

SYLLABUS continued and ASSIGNMENTS

NOTE: Out of respect for our hosts of other faiths, please dress modestly when visiting their places of worship. (Longer pants for men and women and a head scarf for women at the Hindu temple and Muslim mosque.)

THIS PRE-ASSIGNMENT IS DUE AT:
#1 Class at XU & then Hindu temple, Wednesday, March 16, 2016, 5:30-9:15pm

THEME: Introduction and Hinduism

NOTE!! Come to our XU classroom Alter 106 at 5:30 for the first part of our class. We will leave the classroom at 6:15 to visit the Hindu temple and leave there at 8pm.

Due this class:
1) Read the brief "Introduction" chapter of "World Religions in America" by Jacob Neusner.
2) Type one paragraph explaining the goals or purposes of the author for this book.
3) Read chapter 10 on "Hinduism."
4) Type at least one paragraph for each of these questions: # 4, 5, 6, and 9. Add personal insights about what you read, i.e., What impressed or inspired you? Or what new insights do you have about this religion now?
5) Go to website: www.cincinnatitemple.com for the Hindu temple we'll visit
   (Located at: 4920 Klatte Rd. between Milford and Cherry Grove, in the East Gate mall area)
   a. Click on “Menu” and go to “Articles and Literature”
   b. **Read at least one of these articles**: “Hinduism Primer”, "10 Questions on Hinduism," and/or “Hinduism’s Code of Conduct”
6) Type at least two or three paragraphs about your key learnings from these articles.
7) Type two questions to ask our Hindu guide, Mrs. Sharma.

#2 Class at Mosque & then XU, Wednesday, March 23, 2016, 5:30-9:15pm

**THEME: Islam in the U.S.**

**NOTE!!**  Come directly to the Clifton Mosque by 6:00pm located at 3668 Clifton Ave. (parking around back). We will leave at 7 pm to return to our XU classroom until 9:15.

Also note: Women are asked to bring and wear a head scarf.

**Due this class:**

1) Read chapter 8 of Neuser, “Islam in the World and in America.”
2) Type answers to questions: # 3, 4, 8 and 9. Write about some personal comments or insights you gained about Islam from what you read.
3) Visit their website: www.CliftonMosque.org:
   a) click on “Contact” at the main site page to download directions (3668 Clifton Ave.)
   b) click on “About” the main site and read both “History” and “Meet our staff”
4) Type at least two paragraphs about the key points you learned from the website articles.
5) Type two questions for our Muslim guide, Imam Chartier.
6) Read chapter 20, “Religion and Women in America”
7) Type answers to questions #1, 3 or 4 & 6. See connections to this chapter on Islam? Explain.

#3 Class at XU, Wednesday, March 30, 2016, 5:30-9:15pm

**THEMES: Buddhism in the U.S.**

**Due this class:**

1) Read chapter 11 on “Buddhism in the world and in America”.
2) Type answers to questions: #4, 5, 7 and 8. Add personal insights about what you read.
3) Read pages 221-227 of chapter 12 on “East Asian Religions in Today’s America.”
4) Type answers to questions: # 5 and 6. What was impressive, new to you?
5) Visit this website: www.cincinnatidharma.org and click on to read short articles on: “Home,” “About” and “Programs & Classes” and “Service”
6) Type several paragraphs commenting about key points of those articles.
7) Type two questions for our mediation guide, Dr. Kathleen Matthews, from the Dharma Center.

For extra credit:
-- Google “Thich Nhat Hanh,” a leading Buddhist Vietnamese monk, and watch one of his videos or read about him.
-- Type about what practical advice he offers to gain inner personal and social peace.

NOTE! During this class we will divide up chapters of Knitter’s book, *Introducing Theologies of Religions* for student’s group reports for our last 3 classes. Each student will be given “Homework Questions” for specific chapters.

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**# 4 Class at XU, Wednesday, April 6, 2016, 5:30-9:15pm**

**THEME: Judaism in the U.S.**

Due this class:

1) Read chapter 7 on “Judaism in the World and in America”
2) Type answers to questions #2, 3, 6.
3) Read this Jewish history of Cincinnati:  
   https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0004_0_04316.htm
4) In your estimation, what were some of the significant aspects or contributions of the Jewish Community to Cincinnati over these years?
5) TYPE two questions for our guest speaker, Rabbi Abie Ingber of the XU staff.
6) Read chapter 22, “Religion and Society in America”
7) Type answers to questions #1, 4 and 5. What connections can you make with this chapter with the one on Judaism? Explain.

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**# 5 Class Christianity in the U.S.**

**NOTE!! NO class at XU, Wednesday evening April 13**

**But replaced with Sunday meeting, the morning of April 10.**

at Holy Family Catholic Church, 3006 W 8th St, Cincinnati, OH 45205, (Lower Price Hill)  
Phone: (513) 921-7527

Tentatively, 10-11am: Dialogue with Sr. Tracy Kemme, SC and the local Catholic Latino community  
11-12am: Catholic Mass with local community

Due this class:

1) Read chapter 5, “The Religious World of Latino/a-Hispanic Americans”
2) Type answers to questions for chapter 5: #1, 3, 5, and 6. Add personal comments and insights about what you read.
3) Visit their website: [www.holyfamilycincinnati.org](http://www.holyfamilycincinnati.org) and go to their website, click on and read:  
   a) “About Us” to find a “map and directions” **and** “Our Mission”  
   b) “Our parish” to read “Latino Ministry”
4) Type several paragraphs about what you learned about this faith community from their website
5) Read about the U.S. Catholic Bishops’ recommendations on U.S. Immigration Law Reform at:
6) Type your comments about a few of their key reasons for this law reform and specific proposals.
7) Type two questions to ask Sr. Kemme and the Latino/a immigrants.

#5 Class, Option B, Independent study, if you cannot join us for the April 10 Sunday class.

(Could also be used for extra credit)

1) Read a different chapter from our book on Christianity, Chapters 2, 4, 5, or 6
2) Type answers to half of questions for that chapter.
3) Visit a website of another local Christian church community you are not familiar with to understand their worship, beliefs, values, practices and social efforts.
4) Then, if possible, visit and/ or worship with that Christian church community.
5) And/ or interview a member of that Church based on what you read and ask about:
   a) what she/he believes are the key teachings or values of their faith denomination;
   b) what she/he is proud of and what concerns she/he may have about their church;
   and
   c) how and why she/he practices these beliefs with this Christian denomination.
6) Write a 2-3 page reflection paper based on your reading, research, visit and/or interview. Add some of your personal reflections about what you learned. Due next class, April 20.

Note also required:
Read and report on chapter 3, “The Religious World of African Americans”
Due any time before the last class May 4.

1) Type answers to questions #4, 5, 6 and 8. Add some personal insights about what you read.

2a) For an example of a local African American church, visit the website: www.resurrectioncinci.org. Click on and read “Faith Formation” and a few other section to get a feel for this predominately Catholic Christian parish.
    OR

2b) Visit the website of another predominately African American Christian church in our area.

3) Type at least two or three paragraphs about what that particular Christian church has to offer people.

AND/ OR FOR EXTRA CREDIT
Read chapter 21, “Religion and Politics in America.”
Type answers to questions #2, 3 then chose 4, 5 or 6.
#6 Class at XU Wednesday, April 20, 5:30-8:30 (early dismissal)

Theme: Introduction, Replacement and Fulfillment Models of Paul Knitter’s book

Due this class:

1) All students read “Introduction” from *Theologies of Religions* AND the short summary chapters 3 and 6 on “Insights and Questions.”

2) All students type answers to assigned homework questions provided by Dr. Gable. Basically you are to write a brief summary of what is Dr. Knitter’s main message to us, in practical terms, for each chapter.

Student group #1 presents Part I, “Replacement Model” and Student group #2 presents Part II “Fulfillment Model”

REMEMBER ALL GROUPS! For your group’s class presentation lasting 45-60 minutes, you are to provide all other students with a one page typed summary outline that describes the main points of your particular model, as explained by Dr. Knitter.

Essentially, you want to define how Christians in this model have typically related to members of other religions. In addition, point out the positive and negative points of your model as also described by Dr. Knitter. Keep your outline and oral presentation simple, skipping unimportant details. (Homework questions will be provided to help you focus on key points of each chapter.

Also DUE TODAY: If you did NOT go Holy Family Church for our meeting on Sunday, April 10, you need to turn in your report from your Independent study, “Option B,” about your an alternative Christian church visit.

#7 Class At XU classroom April 27, 5:30-9:15

THEME: Mutuality and Acceptance Models

Due this class:

1) All students read the summary chapters 9 and 12 on “Insights and Questions.”

2) All students type answers to assigned homework questions provided by Dr. Gable. Generally you are to write a brief summary of what is Knitter’s main message to us in practical terms for each chapter.

Student group #3 presents Part III, “Mutuality Model” and Student group #4 presents Part IV, “Acceptance Model”

Note! Final term paper due next class.

#8 Final class, At XU classroom April 27, 5:30-9:15

Themes: “Conclusion” chapter and final term paper

Due this class:

1) All students read “Conclusion” chapter from *Theologies of Religions*, by Paul Knitter.
All students type answers to assigned homework questions provided by Dr. Gable. Essentially you are to write a brief summary of what is Dr. Knitter’s main message to us in practical terms in this last chapter.

Discussion of the “Conclusion” chapter

**FINAL PAPER DUE.** Be prepared to read the final paragraph of your final paper to the class about one or two key points you make in your paper.

Please read the following pages if you are taking this course for your E/RS Elective course.

How the course “Dialogue Among World Religions,” Theo 343 properly serves as an Xavier University E/RS Elective course

By Professor Dr. Michael Gable, XU Theology Dept. As approved by the XU E/RS committee, Spring 2007

Course description:

This course will provide a basic introduction to the major moral insights, values, and practices that remain very much alive among the members of these world religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The purpose of this study is to grow in appreciation of the personal and social gains that come for being able to look at the world through others’ eyes. A variety of current social issues will also be discussed among students and guest speakers of these religions to promote basic skills of respectful dialogue and consideration of different viewpoints. This course will also examine the main models or manners in which Christianity approaches, inter-relates and dialogues with these other religions. In this process then, students will hopefully realize the critical importance, perhaps the necessity, of inter-religious dialogue both for one’s personal life and for the peace of the world.

My course fits the criteria for an E/RS course in the following ways:

1. While preserving the integrity of the discipline from which it comes, the course integrates in a substantive way the ethical and/or religious analysis of a socially significant issues or issues.

As noted above in the course description, this course is designed to enable students to understand the key values and ethical systems of other religions and then how they view a variety of social issues through those moral and ethical lenses. Consequently, we will first employ Jacob Neusner’s, *World Religions in America*, to truly appreciate the moral contributions these religions offer humankind especially in our nation. This book does not focus on the history of religions nor does it seek to compare the worth of them. Rather, this text emphasizes the principles and values of these religions while carefully listening to how each religion addresses, individuals, the world, and the divine. Neusner as this does this course, encourage growth in appreciation of the personal and social gains that come from being able view life through the eyes of members of other world religions.

Just as importantly, we will use Paul Knitter’s *Introducing Theologies of Religions* in order to analyze the four main approaches Christianity has toward these other religions. This will help students realize the wide variety of perspectives Christians have had and continue to have toward viewing other religions. This will enable students to identify and possibly change their own approach to other people and members of other religions.

The process and procure for this course is just as important as the context. We will not only study world religions and the various models of approaches to and theologies of religions, but we will actually practice dialoguing with members of other religions, on their own religious turf, at their own places of worship. “Walking in another person’s moccasins” and seeing life and social issues from others’ perspective is essential to developing a more global perspective and a deeper understanding of one’s own meaning in life and beliefs. Students are requested to bring various social/religious topics and questions on which to dialogue in these locations and classes.

These dialogues will foster dialogue skills and help all to better understand each others’ rationale and value systems. For example, students are to bring such questions as, “I currently and personally believe this about the death penalty. But what do some Jewish groups believe about the death penalty and why?” “I believe this about abortion, but what do some Muslims teach on abortion and why?” etc.

In this process then, students ought to sense the personal challenges of dealing with and appreciating the differences and similarities of others’ viewpoint and sometimes conflicting belief systems. At the same time, the participants in this exercise can also taste some of the fruits of dialogue: joy, peace, and a sense of global sister/brotherhood that we seek. Hopefully this can lead to the realization of the profound need for more and deeper inter-religious dialogue if this planet is to reach the 22nd century.

2. This course is clearly identified as an E/RS course

Especially in the introduction of this course, the professor will demonstrate how this course draws student’s attention explicitly of the E/RS objectives, as just explained above.

Essentially, the bottom line then is that this course and E/RS objectives seek to empower students to look at the world through others’ eyes and appreciate the complexities of social structures and issues. Likewise then, this course encourages students to consider the common
ground we share with all humans of good will in that deep shared desire to eliminate unjust personal suffering and social/ecological exploitation for the common good. This effort of studying, listening, and dialoguing with members of other faith and fellow students can then foster more inner and communal harmony and peace.

After proper approval, this course will then be listed as an E/RS course in the syllabus.

3. This course provides regular and substantive opportunities for critical discussion.

As stated above, beside the necessity of studying and analyzing other religions and approaches to other religions, there will be on-going and profound opportunities for students to discuss and dialogue with fellow students, the professor, and members of other religions. Handouts will be providing explaining the guidelines for respectful and fruitful inter-religious dialogue. Likewise, students will be expected to read and present the various sections of Knitter’s book on inter-religious dialogue. All students will also be expected to work in groups to provide a respectful “fish-bowl” debate to the rest of class about the pros and cons of various approaches and models of dialogue with other religions.

4. The course complements, in some demonstrable way, the other required courses that make up the E/RS Focus.

After describing the E/RS focus, the professor will demonstrate how this course contributes to the E/RS goals and objectives of analysis of social issues in light of human values to promote a sense of compassionate solidarity and service. The professor will also regularly explain and encourage students to consider the interrelations between this class and the methods and content of the other two foundational E/RS courses.

Dr. Michael Gable is the professor for this course of “Dialogue with World Religions.” He completed his doctorate in Theology/Missiology with the assistance of Dr. Paul Knitter with a dissertation on “Inter-religious dialogue and what Socially Engaged Buddhism has to offer to Christian Liberation Theology.” Dr. Gable has served with the Franciscans and later with his family as Maryknoll lay missioners in Latin America.